

September 9, 2006

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

A Finance Committee meeting was held Tuesday, September 5, 2006 at 2:30 p.m. in the County Administration Building, Quorum Court Meeting Room, 215 East Central, Bentonville.

Committee Members Present: Moore, Sheridan, Stephenson, Summers, Wolf, Wozniak

Others Present: County Clerk Mary L. Slinkard, Treasurer Deanna Ratcliffe, Ed Gartin, Travis Harp, Richard McComas, Michele Anderson, Kathy Bannister, Darryl Marks, Elizabeth Bowen,

Media: James Bowie – Morning News; Jennifer Turner– Benton County Daily Record

JP Tim Summers called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Bill Millager suggested that the County investigate the practice of “Zero-Based Budgeting”, which would require all departments to start with zero balances and justify all expenses at the beginning of the new budget year instead of automatically increasing last year’s budget.

1. Grants Administrator Report

Grants Administrator Kathy Bannister stated that an EPA Grant of \$298,000 is pending, and that she has assisted the City of Gravette with a parks grant. GIS Coordinator Elizabeth Bowen stated that they would like to apply for an \$81,400 grant from ESRI and Stratus Technologies in order to provide GIS data to smaller cities who do not have their own GIS systems, and that they will need a Resolution because although there is no county match required, there are yearly licensing and maintenance fees of approximately \$8,700 associated with it. She said they are planning to offset those costs by dividing them among the cities that would use the system. JP Summers asked if they planned to include those costs in the 2007 Budget. Elizabeth Bowen stated that they would if they received the grant. JP Sheridan made motion to forward a Resolution granting permission to apply for the ESRI and Stratus Technologies Grant to the September 12, 2006 Committee of Thirteen meeting, seconded by JP Moore. Motion passed by unanimous show of hands. JP Wolf commended Kathy Bannister for the excellent job she has done. JP Summers asked Kathy Bannister to give a report on her work at the September 12, 2006 Committee of Thirteen meeting.

2. County Attorney Report

County Attorney Ed Gartin stated that no date has been set for the Stipulation of Facts hearing that has been requested by attorneys for both sides involved in the Road Tax dispute.

3. Sheriff's Department – Fund 970

Comptroller Richard McComas stated that the Sheriff's Department is requesting \$23,000 to be appropriated from the S.S.I. Incentive Fund in order to purchase a lawn tractor and washing machine instead of making the request in the 2007 Budget. Treasurer Deanna Ratcliffe explained that the fund comes from the Federal Government, and is an incentive for counties to notify the Social Security office that a person who is receiving benefits has been incarcerated. She stated that a person may not collect Social Security benefits while incarcerated, and the county receives \$400 per inmate if the Social Security office is notified within 90 days of incarceration. She said the fund currently has a balance of \$43,000, and there are no stipulations regarding how it may be spent. JP Summers stated that the Sheriff's Department should be commended for turning in the information and getting that money for the county. JP Sheridan made motion to forward an appropriation ordinance request to the September 12, 2006 Committee of Thirteen meeting, seconded by JP Wolf. Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

4. Personnel Request – County Clerk

County Clerk Mary L. Slinkard stated that she will need one person to staff the new office in Rogers, and that the position will need to be an Office Manager position similar to the one in the Siloam Springs office because that person will need to handle all aspects of the County Clerk's duties. She said the budget impact for 2006 will be approximately \$10,000. JP Summers stated that they approved positions for the Collector's and Assessor's offices, and if they are going to provide service to the county residents, they will need someone in the County Clerk's office. Comptroller Richard McComas stated that they will need to amend Schedule 4, but will not likely need a budget adjustment since there is money left in the County Clerk's salary line item. JP Stephenson made motion to forward an appropriation ordinance request to add one Deputy Clerk-Office Manager position to the County Clerk's office to the September 12, 2006 Committee of Thirteen, seconded by JP Wolf. JP Wolf asked if there would be a problem covering absences with only one person in the office. Mary L. Slinkard stated that she anticipates the traffic to be heavy enough in the Rogers office that she will eventually need two people there. She said that she already anticipates hiring temporary help for the November election. JP Stephenson asked if it would be possible to use a second person in the office to work part-time in the other offices. The Committee discussed the possibility of a floating pool of personnel who would work in various offices as needed. JP Stephenson stated that they should explore that option. JP Summers asked if it would be difficult to charge the salaries to the different departments. Comptroller Richard McComas stated that he did not think it would be a problem. Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

5. Road Department – Road Grader Exchange

Comptroller Richard McComas stated that they have researched various options and found no significant difference in the return from investments and the cost of financing the road grader purchase, and recommended paying for them from County General, with the Road Department to repay the amount over the next three years. JP Stephenson made motion to forward an appropriation ordinance to the September 12, 2006 Committee of 13 meeting stating that the road grader purchase is to be funded from County General, and that the Road Department will repay the amount in equal payments budgeted over the next three years, seconded by JP Sheridan. Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

6. Maintenance Department – Air Conditioner Costs

Michele Anderson stated that the repairs to the Administration Building air conditioner unit cost approximately \$18,000, and that a new unit was installed at the Juvenile Detention Center at a cost of \$5800 because the old one could not be repaired.

7. Jail Collections

Comptroller Richard McComas noted that the month was good for Jail Collections, and they are now \$8,000 ahead of budget projections.

8. Sales Tax Report

Comptroller Richard McComas stated that sales tax receipts only increased 6% over this month last year, but the overall 2006 increase was still at 10%, which is what they projected.

9. Monthly Expenditure Report and Fuel Analysis

Accounting Manager Michele Anderson stated that all departments should be at 67%, and although some are a little over, General Fund is still at 63% overall.

Michele Anderson stated that they are at 70% to 80% of the fuel budget for the year, or approximately \$150,000 more than had been spent at this time in 2005.

10. 2007 Budget Calendar

Comptroller Richard McComas stated that during the budget process each year, every department is required to justify all budget requests, so they are in effect already using the “zero-based budgeting” method. He said that he anticipates having all of the third quarter numbers by the end of October, and they will start meeting weekly in late October. JP Summers stated that they will continue to start the meetings at 2:30, and change the time if it becomes necessary.

11. Other Business

Darryl Marks presented a proposal for the purchase of 16 laptop computers to be used for agendas at Quorum Court and other committee meetings. JP Summers stated that they could also be used for staff training. JP Sheridan expressed concern about the security of laptops, and asked if it would be better to have stationary computers which stayed in the Quorum Court meeting room. JP Summers noted that they had also discussed using a monitor system just to view agenda items during meetings. JP Moore stated that they would be very useful during Planning Board meetings so that everyone could have a clear view of maps and developments, etc. JP Stephenson stated that the intention was to facilitate Quorum Court members doing business, and if it is something that the Planning Department needs, then perhaps that should be addressed in their budget requests. JP Stephenson made motion to forward the proposal to purchase 16 laptops to the September 12, 2006 Committee of Thirteen meeting, for budget consideration, seconded by JP Sheridan. Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote. Comptroller Richard McComas noted that it would be a separate line item in the Information Systems budget.

JP Summers announced that the next Finance Committee meeting will be October 3, 2006 at 2:30 p.m.

After motion and second the meeting adjourned at 4:27 p.m.